Biographical Sketch of Minot Pratt

by Ray Angelo (2017; revised 2021)

Minot Pratt was a Concord worthy of whom relatively little is known. He was overshadowed by other famous Concordians -- Thoreau, Emerson, Alcott and Hawthorne, who were his friends. He had significant connections to all of these families. Minot was a founder and director of the experimental community Brook Farm, active in Concord town affairs, and left behind a noteworthy manuscript on the flora of Concord, a flora so diligently explored by him and by others of his time and afterward. Unlike his renowned friends, no image that is definitively him is known (but see Appendix H). The closest we have is a description of his appearance in Lindsay Swift's "Brook Farm" (1900) in which he was said to be "one of the most conspicuously attractive inhabitants [of Brook Farm] … large and of fine physique, with strong features, and a modest but dignified mien." This sketch is an attempt to lift him more into the light for a better appreciation of his admirable life.

Minot was the third child of Bela and Sophia Pratt, who welcomed him into the world in Weymouth, Massachusetts, on January 8, 1805. He was among the seventh generation of Pratts thriving in Weymouth. Bela and Sophia would eventually have thirteen children. All were females, except the oldest child, Ezra (1801-1874), Minot, and a younger brother, Bela (1810-1844). The myriad Pratt relatives in Weymouth were all descended from their patriarch, Mathew Pratt, who was born in 1595 in Aston Clinton, England, and who died in Weymouth, Massachusetts on August 29, 1672.

According to *A Genealogical Record of Mathew Pratt of Weymouth, Mass.* (1890) by Francis G. Pratt, Jr., "The name of Pratt, from a very remote period, has been common in England, especially the more southern counties." He notes that the family is of Norman descent and had many noteworthy representatives even before the conquest in the 11th century. The name Pratt is said to occur more frequently than any other name in the early records of Weymouth, the family then being the largest one in town. Mathew Pratt's name is on the oldest list of landowners of Weymouth dating from about 1643. Cotton Mather refers to Mathew in his *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702) as a very religious man.

Minot Pratt's father, Bela (1777 - 1843), was a stone mason, an extensive builder and contractor of excellent reputation. In addition to building the first stone house (his residence) in Weymouth, he built the Bird Island Light in Buzzard's Bay in 1819 and the only stone church in Marblehead in 1824. He died in the field with his scythe by his side and scythe-rifle in his hand.

The town of Weymouth into which Minot was born and grew up is the second oldest permanent settlement in New England (a 1622 colony failed, but the one led by Robert Gorges in 1623 succeeded). It attracted early European settlers by virtue of its beautiful and protected location -- shielded from the ocean by Nantasket beach and peninsula, and from the Native Americans by its extension into a bay between two rivers -- and by its central location for trade, with easy access by sea and land. At the time of Minot's birth the town was in a transition from a fishing and farming town (with fertile farms and excellent dairies) to an industrialized one manufacturing nails, shoes and fireworks. In a period that included Minot's youth, the population of the town grew from 1,803 in 1800 to 2,407 in 1820.

Little is known of Minot's youth. It is likely he attended school at one of the schoolhouses in Weymouth, which after 1810 included instruction in Greek and Latin. In 1821 he would have been one of the 895 students counted in the town. Franklin Sanborn reports that, as a boy, Minot was put to work learning stone-cutting, his father's craft. But, disliking this, he journeyed to New Bedford, Massachusetts, at age sixteen and soon entered the office of the *New Bedford Mercury* newspaper to learn printing. Six years later in 1827 he left for Boston and there soon took charge of make up and printing of *The Christian Register*, the leading Unitarian weekly, a position he held for a good number of years. Minot had been brought up as a Calvinist. However, while in New Bedford he changed his views under the preaching of the noted Unitarian minister Orville Dewey. When he arrived in Boston, he soon entered earnestly into Sunday school work. In those early years he belonged to the Unitarian parish of Ralph Waldo Emerson in the North End of Boston and was superintendent of its Sunday school for a long time.

On March 15, 1829 Minot married Maria Jones Bridge (1806-1891) of Chelsea, Massachusetts, daughter of John Bridge and Rebecca (Beal) Bridge. Young clergyman Emerson performed the ceremony, reportedly the first one he did. The young couple at first lived in Chelsea where, in addition to his printer work for the *The Christian Register*, he was deacon and sexton at the Unitarian church and right hand to his minister, Samuel Dowse Robbins, who lived long enough to read a poem at Minot's funeral that he composed for the occasion (Appendix E).

The young couple next moved to Hingham, Massachusetts. There Minot printed a 36-page pamphlet entitled "The annual reports of the Boston Sunday School Society for the year 1829" ("Hingham, Press of M. Pratt"). In Hingham Maria bore their first child, Henry Minot Pratt, on February 22, 1830. Unfortunately, this child died six months later on August 29. Their second child, Frederick Gray Pratt, was born in Hingham on April 2, 1831, and outlived his parents and all his siblings, surviving until 1905.

Minot and Maria returned to Boston about 1833, where Minot continued his work for *The Christian Register* for another eight years. Their third child, John Bridge Pratt, was born in Boston on June 16, 1833. John later married Anna Bronson Alcott, the eldest of the Alcott sisters. Minot and Maria's only daughter, Caroline Hayden Pratt, arrived on November 9, 1836 in Boston.

Minot Pratt is often attributed in catalogs as the author of an anonymous 1836 pamphlet entitled "A Friend of the South, in answer to Remarks on Dr. Channing's Slavery." However, Minot's name only appears as the person who registered the work in the District Court of Massachusetts on behalf of the publishing company. The author of the pamphlet notes traveling to Georgia, which Minot is not known to have done. To be sure, Minot wrote some smaller items anonymously. A charming note of this was made by the editor of *The Christian Register and Boston Observer* in their July 7, 1838, issue:

HONOR TO WHOM HONOR.

We take occasion to slip a few lines into this paper without the particular knowledge of our worthy friend, the printer, Mr Minot Pratt, just to say that he is the author of the excellent Hymn, sung at the Sunday School celebration at Chelsea, and also of several good pieces of Poetry that have appeared in the Register, signed M.—among which were some very beautiful verses entitled 'The Sailor's Return.'

Minot Pratt did not attend college, but certainly in his trade had ample opportunity to educate himself. His contact with Emerson, Unitarian minister George Ripley (1802-1880), and, no doubt also, the foremost Unitarian preacher of the time, Dr. William Ellery Channing (1780-1842), must have helped shape his outlook on nature and spirituality. As a radical Unitarian, Minot naturally took an interest in transcendentalism. In September 1836 George Ripley with three others founded the Transcendental Club, a group of liberal thinkers meeting at each other's homes to discuss social and religious topics of the day. Members initially included Emerson and Bronson Alcott, and later also Henry Thoreau and Margaret Fuller, among others. Minot Pratt is not known to have attended any meetings of the Club. But he must have been aware of it during its approximately four-year existence due to the Unitarian connections of some of its members.

George Ripley initiated one the most notable chapters in Minot's life. Ripley had the goal of creating an ideal community embodying ideas discussed at the Club meetings. To that end Ripley first wrote a letter to Emerson in November 1840 proposing to acquire a small tract of land to contain a garden and farm to provide sustenance for the families, and to establish a school where the most complete education would be provided for all members. With his own funds Ripley had already acquired a 208-acre, former dairy farm in West Roxbury, Massachusetts, in October 1840. Emerson declined Ripley's proposal, but, about the beginning of April 1841, Ripley, his wife, his sister and about fifteen others, including Nathaniel Hawthorne, Maria Pratt, and the three Pratt children (Frederick, John and

Caroline) arrived at the farm. Maria Pratt is reported to have been even more eager to pursue this new venture than Minot.

The 1840 census shows Minot and Maria residing in Chelsea, just north of Boston. The delay (until the latter part of the following year) in Minot's leaving Chelsea to join his wife and children at the farm was related to his job at *The Christian Register*. Lindsay Swift relates that he had for some time the position of foreman there, with many details to be arranged before he could leave. Minot is credited as printer for that periodical as late as August 28, 1841.

The organization of the Brook Farm Institute of Agriculture and Education formally took place on September 29, 1841. The original twelve signers included Minot and Maria along with Nathaniel Hawthorne, a future neighbor of the Pratts in Concord. Twenty-four shares in the organization were sold initially for $500 each. Minot acquired three shares and Maria two shares. George Ripley, Minot Pratt and William Allen were appointed directors of the new organization. Minot also was appointed treasurer and co-director of agriculture and two years later became a trustee of the organization. On January 18, 1844 Minot was one of the three directors who signed the introductory statement to the constitution of the Brook Farm Association. Not long after Minot arrived at Brook Farm, his mother, Sophia, died in Plymouth, Massachusetts, on November 5, 1841. She was survived by Minot's father, Bela, and multiple siblings of Minot.

Remembrances of Minot and his family at Brook Farm are the most widely reported ones of his life. John Codman, a resident of Brook Farm, describes him as "a finely formed, large, graceful-featured, modest man. His voice was low, soft and calm. His presence inspired confidence and respect. Whatever he touched was well done. He was faithful and dignified, and the serenity of his nature welled up in genial smiles. In farm work he was Mr. Ripley's right hand. … They agreed in practical matters; indeed, Mr. Ripley deferred to him." Codman describes Maria as "an earnest, strong and faithful worker." Minot and Maria had "entered the scheme with fervor." Indeed, the Brook Farm account book shows that the couple were among the hardest working members. Minot is reported to have been the first to give Mr. Ripley a hand in the practical work of organizing the society. Lindsay Swift

says much the same, calling Minot Pratt perhaps "Mr. Ripley's most trusted adviser in matters relating to the practical management of the farm."

Minot's later vocation as a famer in Concord started at Brook Farm. He was noted there as one of those who devoted most of their time to outdoor farm work. More than one account refers to him as the head farmer at Brook Farm. Swift writes: "He became head farmer at the end of the first season. Although Pratt had had no experience in farm work, he took to it as a man who had always believed that he was not meant to be a printer; and he rapidly acquired a sound working knowledge of practical agriculture which, it has been thought, would have averted financial disaster had it been supplemented by an equivalent wisdom on the part of even a few of his fellow workers."

At Brook Farm Minot's particular interest in wild plants began to develop. John Codman notes: "He was practical, honest, brave, and had enough of poetry in his composition to take the dry edge off of his daily routine of toil. When ploughing the fields it was with regret he turned under the lovely wild flowers and the wild rose bushes, and it often struck his fancy to transplant them from the fields to the roadside where they blessed the eyes of the wayfarer." Similarly, Swift relates that Minot's passion was botany, not merely as science but with a feeling for beauty in large part.

During their four-year stay at Brook Farm, the Pratt family stayed in the main building known as The Hive. Ora Sedgewick, a fellow resident as a teenage girl, remembers that Minot and Maria took charge of The Hive, where all the cooking and washing were done. Maria, she noted, was a most kind and motherly woman.

"The Hive"

On July 2, 1842 their last child, Theodore Parker Pratt, was born, most likely in this house. He was the first child, and one of the few, that was born at Brook Farm. This happiness was followed the next year by the sadness of the passing of Minot's father, Bela, in Weymouth, at the age of 65.

Education (intellectual and practical) was very important at Brook Farm. So Minot taught in addition to his farming duties. John Sears recalled as a boy at Brook Farm that Minot gave his industrial classes a good deal of thought and care. The young students who chose to work in the fields and gardens with Minot received lessons in botany, agricultural chemistry, and the planting, cultivating and harvesting of crops.

A number of notable individuals visited Brook Farm while Minot's family was part of the community. It is reasonable to assume that Minot would have conversed with many, if not most, of these. Ralph W. Emerson, Margaret Fuller, William Henry Channing (nephew of William Ellery Channng), Bronson Alcott, Theodore Parker (after whom the new Pratt boy was named), Elizabeth Peabody and possibly Thoreau were among the luminaries that dropped by. The three major Concord figures among these (Emerson, Thoreau, and Alcott) likely influenced Minot and Maria to choose that historic township as the place to settle after Brook Farm.

After four years the Pratts decided to leave the community. It is not known with certainty what triggered their decision. Lindsay Swift asserts that although Minot, Maria and the children were very happy in the community and were receptive to the changes it underwent, they foresaw early the termination of the enterprise and did not care to become stranded without means of a livelihood. On April 3, 1845, Minot wrote a warm and graceful departure letter.

"DEAR SIR: — In withdrawing from the Association I cannot believe it necessary for me to say to you that I do not cease to feel an interest, a very deep interest, in the success of the cause in which I have in my humble way labored with you for the last few years. The final success of this attempt to live out the great and holy idea of association for brotherly coöperation, will be to me a greater cause for joy than any merely personal benefit to myself could be.

"I wished, but could not do it, to say to you and others how much I love and esteem you, and how painful it is for me to leave those to whom I am so much indebted for personal kindnesses. You know me well enough to believe that I feel, more deeply than I can express, pained by this separation. God bless you. God bless and prosper the Association individually and collectively.

"Yours truly,

"MINOT PRATT."

In the subsequent failure of Brook Farm the Pratts are reported to have lost almost all their investment.

The Pratts likely left Brook Farm on April 4, 1845. In a letter to Brook Farm member John S. Dwight dated April 5, 1845, Concord resident George W. Curtis, a former boarder at Brook Farm, wrote that he encountered the previous day "Mrs. Pratt and family making their reappearance in civilization. All Brook Farm, in the golden age, seemed to be strapped on the rear of their wagon as baggage, for Mrs. Pratt was the first lady I saw at Brook Farm, where ladyhood blossomed so fairly." The Pratts took possession of a farm in historic Concord. Seventy years earlier that month the embattled farmers of Concord and surrounding towns faced and fired upon British soldiers by a bridge just six tenths of a mile south of their new home (presently 635 Monument Street). It was a propitious time - the

same year Hawthorne departed Concord's Old Manse, just a few months before Thoreau took up residence at Walden Pond, and just one month after the Alcotts returned to Concord following the short-lived Fruitlands experiment.

The Pratts are said to have built the cottage that they moved into in 1845 on the site of an older house at the southwest foot of Punkatasset Hill near a magnificent elm. On their farm Minot "tilled his acres, planted his trees and vines, and dressed his garden with his own hands" until the end of his days. At the time they arrived Minot was 40 years old, Maria was 39, their oldest child, Frederick, had just turned 14, and their youngest of four children, Theodore, was just 2. Annie Sawyer Downs remembered their simplicity. After noting that maids would always serve meals when you dined at the Emersons, she said "At the Pratts we all sat at a great table in the kitchen with the hired men in their shirtsleeves and waited on ourselves or went without just as we pleased!"

In the first years after settling in Concord, Minot was most likely occupied with developing and working his land. His farm has been described as large and extending down to the Concord River just north of the Monument Street bridge that crosses the river. There is little record of his endeavors at this time. However, he did interact with his neighbors soon, as he submitted a petition in 1847 urging the Massachusetts state legislators not to appropriate funds to aid the Massachusetts volunteers engaged in the ongoing Mexican War. The list of 19 Concord residents signing it included his wife, Maria, and Ruth Emerson (Ralph Waldo Emerson's mother) signing second on the list right below Minot Pratt, whose signature headed the list. Also, he is said to have been chosen by the town to be superintendent of public grounds for six or eight years. For a time he served on the school committee board. He penned articles on his favorite themes for periodicals such as *The Christian Register*, the *Springfield Republican*, the *Commonwealth*, the *Waltham Free Press*, and *The Concord Freeman*.

The 1850 U.S. census shows Minot and Maria living with their four children in Concord. His occupation is listed as "farmer." At a meeting of the Middlesex Anti-Slavery Society in Concord on March 5, 1850, Minot Pratt was chosen to serve as Secretary pro tem. His participation in the

anti-slavery movement of that era dates back to at least 1838. He was listed in the June 8 issue that year of the abolitionist newspaper *The Liberator* as a member from Chelsea, Massachusetts, at the New England Anti-Slavery Convention. In 1851 Minot was one of about 30 mostly Concord voters to sign a petition requesting the Massachusetts legislature to protest the recently passed Fugitive Slave Act in the U.S. Congress.

In June 1848 Minot was paid $2 for setting out trees for the town in Monument Ground. That same year the first edition of Asa Gray's *Manual of Botany* was published, which most likely inspired Minot to learn the local flora with more scientific precision, as it did Thoreau at about the same time. In these early Concord years Minot likely began exploring the meadows, bogs, woodlands, swamps, rocky outcrops, marshes, ponds, fields and rivers of the town and soon developed a familiarity with the town's trees, shrubs and wildflowers that rivaled Thoreau's.

The friendship between Minot and Thoreau probably blossomed soon after the Pratts' arrival in Concord. Maria Pratt later recalled to Edward Emerson that Thoreau "used to come much" to the Pratt house. The deep interest that both had in wild plants would naturally lead to frequent sharing of information. The first reference to Minot in Thoreau's *Journal* appears on October 13, 1851, when Minot tells Thoreau of a large honeybee's nest in the top of a blown-down maple tree that held 25 pounds of honey. In the second mention on January 26, 1852, referring to him simply as "Pratt," Thoreau reveals the high opinion he harbored of him. Thoreau writes "I do not know more honest and trustworthy men than Rice, Pratt, Barrett" and on the same day includes Pratt in a short list of men "some of whom are men of sterling worth and probity, the salt of the earth, and confessedly the very best of our citizens, though the Church may have called them infidels. They are only more faithful than the rest."

Most of the earliest references to Minot in Thoreau's *Journal* relate to the fauna of Concord -- beehive-hunting, hawks, and diagnosing a mammal skull (muskrat, Thoreau affirmed). The first of many exchanges of botanical information starts on August 30, 1854, when Thoreau's *Journal* refers to a visit by Minot in the evening. Minot tells Thoreau of his finding three uncommon species or forms of plants and where he found them. He also

remarks on finding a mud turtle at Brook Farm weighing 45 pounds. On September 3, 1854, Thoreau describes a walk with Minot in part to look at plants Minot had found and described to him a few days earlier. Some of Minot's plant finds in Concord were new to Thoreau. For example, on May 18, 1857, Minot tells Thoreau of the conspicuous Wild Calla (*Calla palustris*) growing in a swamp not far from Minot's home. Between about 1850 and his death in 1862, Thoreau rapidly developed an excellent knowledge of the scientific names for the plants of New England, and Concord in particular. By 1854 Thoreau's use of scientific names for the flora of Concord in his *Journal* had become quite frequent. It would be natural for Minot's deep interest in plants, particularly the wildflowers, trees, shrubs and ferns, to be affected by Thoreau's newly acquired expertise in their scientific names. The evidence for this is indirect but significant -- the frequent exchange of floral finds between them documented in Thoreau's *Journal*, a copy of Asa Gray's botany manual owned by Minot (now at the Concord Free Public Library) with many annotations indicating locations where he found various species, later correspondence between Minot and a botanist of professional caliber, and most importantly the impressive manuscript that Minot carefully prepared of the flora of Concord and left at his death to the Concord Free Public Library (the first such flora of the town). In this, his most noteworthy written work, Minot lists 736 species, including 114 that he introduced. For each species he includes scientific and common names, frequency of occurrence in Concord, habitat, months of flowering, and, in some cases, where in Concord they were found.

Minot's Concord flora manuscript reveals that he knew the locations of some wild plants in the town that Thoreau never found. But Minot had the advantage of living in Concord 16 years after Thoreau's death. Annie Sawyer Downs told a story in 1891 that illustrates their botanical friendship. Thoreau led Downs and Minot by a circuitous route to an unnamed rare plant that he claimed no one else in Concord had ever found. Downs reported noticing an odd twinkle in Minot's eye when Thoreau made this claim. She asked him later what he meant by it. Minot told her he had known of the plant years before Thoreau found it, suggesting that Minot had secrets from Thoreau, and that he was humble and considerate in not undermining Thoreau's claim. Downs commented that "He [Thoreau] had no secrets, however, from Mr. Minot Pratt."

More concrete evidence of Minot's plant-finding prowess include his find of the locally rare shrub, Labrador Tea, in two cold bogs in Concord, whereas Thoreau had found it only in one of these; his find in one of these two bogs of the locally rare Creeping Snowberry, that has not been found in Concord before or since; and his most exciting find, the fern ally known as Adder's Tongue. Minot found it on August 25, 1872, near the end of his life and collected a specimen that now resides in the New England Botanical Club collection at the Harvard University Herbaria. As shown on the image of this specimen below Minot wrote on a note with the specimen: "10 ½ o'clock. Eureka!!" Only one other skilled botanizer of Concord, W.H. Manning, has found this in the town.

The practical experience in farming Minot had acquired at Brook Farm and on his own farm in Concord motivated him to participate in local farming

affairs. The Concord Farmers' Club was founded in January 1852 to discuss topics of practical value and encourage experimentation. Minot was one of the founding members and rarely missed its meetings, which were held in the homes of its members. Records of the Club show that Minot served as its president, and, for 16 years near the end of his life, as its secretary. He presented essays at Club meetings such as "Muck, Its Value, Use, and Effect," "Wood-Lands and Forest Trees," "Trees of Concord, Indigenous and Introduced" and "Roast Beef and Plum Pudding, or, the Science of Living and Enjoying Life." As secretary, Minot commented in the records for the February 15, 1865 meeting: "The secretary suggested that walks in the woods and fields would be of use to all, even to the ladies, if they could overcome the fear of snakes, toads, spiders, etc. ..." The records of the club, from its beginning to its end in 1883, were presented to the Concord Free Public Library about five years afterward by Minot's eldest son, Frederick Gray Pratt, who also played a prominent role in the Club and wrote a history of it.

On March 7, 1861, Minot read to the Concord Farmer's Club his essay entitled "Flowers and Flower Culture" (Appendix B). He also read it to the high school students in Concord in the school year 1860-1861, according to the report of the school superintendent, Bronson Alcott. Another essay read at the Concord Farmers' Club by Minot on November 13, 1862, entitled "The Farmer's Compensation" was later published in the Boston newspaper *Commonwealth* in two parts, on April 10 & 17, 1863, under the name "A Concord Farmer" (Appendix C). It includes the engaging passage:

"... in a small shaking bog, all within the space of two square rods, the Ledum latifolium [Labrador Tea], the Andromeda polyfolia [Bog Rosemary], the Kalmia glauca [Bog Laurel], the white fringed Orchis,— all beautiful and rare, — are now found, though the Vandal who claims to own the bog is rapidly pushing his 'improvements' in such direction as to threaten destruction to these worthy tenants of his soil. In a wild spot not far away from this, (long may it remain secluded,) the graceful climbing fern, very rare, and the large purple orchis, (Orchis fimbriata of Gray), the most beautiful of the genus, are found." [Note: The "improvements" did eventually destroy all the rarities at the small bog treasured by Pratt and Thoreau, but the climbing fern and large purple orchis survive.]

The *Commonwealth* was for a time edited by noted Concord journalist, author and reformer, Franklin Sanborn, who later wrote of Minot: "One of

these authors, but little known as such, but one of my best contributors while I edited the Boston Commonwealth, in 1863-65, was Minot Pratt."

His love of wildflowers and trees and shrubs inspired Minot to enrich the flora of Concord by bringing native plants from other parts of New England and even other parts of the eastern U.S. and planting them in Concord, where they were not native. He did this so skillfully that some yet survive -- to the consternation of Concord botanizers in later years who would wonder whether a new plant find was no more than a Pratt introduction. Fortunately, in his manuscript listing the flora of Concord and in notations in his surviving copy of Gray's manual of botany, Minot left indications of which species he had introduced and from whence he had brought them. Thoreau enthusiast, Concord native, and amateur botanist, Alfred W. Hosmer, attempted to list these for the record in two articles in the botany journal, *Rhodora* in 1899. A later accounting [by this author] using Minot's manuscript for the flora of the town and annotations in his botany manual shows that he introduced 114 species of which at least 24 have survived.

Some of Minot's introduced plants can yet be found at a spring on the former Pratt property. Thoreau noted in his Journal on July 7, 1860, in his inventory of Concord's springs: "Perhaps the most natural well of them all is No. 11, Minot Pratt's, filling an oblong angular cavity between upright rocks." The location of this botanically interesting spring on Pratt's property became lost in the early 20th century, but was rediscovered by this author in May 1982 (recent image below).

Pratt's Spring
Photo © Cherrie Corey 2013

Edwin M. Cabot relates why another spring nearby was later sometimes called Asa Gray Spring (after the noted botanist at Harvard College): "One day in June forty years ago [ca. 1860], Professor Gray, tramping through these woods with Minot Pratt, lingered in this enchanting spot, and thenceforth the spring has borne his name, bestowed upon it that day by Mr. Pratt." Although there appears to be no other evidence that Minot Pratt met or had contact with the distinguished Asa Gray, and although correspondence with Gray has been reported but not found, it is plausible that the two had contact. Minot did communicate and meet with another botanist of professional caliber, George E. Davenport (1833-1907), a noted expert on ferns. Letters and postcards from Minot to Davenport survive at the Harvard University Botany Libraries. In this correspondence Minot informs Davenport of various botanical finds in the Concord area and discusses the arrangements for them to make "tramps" and "rambles" together. In one letter of May 12, 1872, Minot notes traveling to Vermont where he collects a wildflower to "transplant to the woods of Concord." He reports adding ten ferns to the flora of Concord. Pratt's Spring appears to

be referred in an undated postcard to Davenport as "a shady spring that bubbles up through a low ledge."

On January 16, 1853, the oldest son of Minot and Maria, Frederick Gray Pratt, married Sarah Maria Emery in Hingham, Massachusetts. The first grandchild of Minot and Maria, Henry Minot Pratt (1853-1925), was born later that same year on December 23 in Meadville, Pennsylvania. It is not known why Frederick and Sarah were in Pennsylvania, but they did return to Concord by the start of the Civil War. Frederick is noted for being the only Concord man to be drafted into the Civil War, and his headstone in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery notes the unit in which he served which was formed in 1863.

Frederick Gray Pratt (July 1901)
Photograph by Herbert W. Gleason
Courtesy of the Concord Free Public Library

Frederick was very active in the Concord Farmers' Club and started Concord Nurseries on the Pratt family farm after his father's death. The nursery

business was continued by Frederick's son Henry after Frederick's death in 1905 until as late as 1915.

Town records show that Minot served on the Concord School Committee in 1859, at a time when Theodore, the youngest child of Minot and Maria, would have been in attendance. Tragically, Theodore died of edema of the head (often caused by heart disease) on March 20, 1859, at the age of sixteen. At that time he was buried on their property under a great white oak. Thoreau was one of the few outside of the family asked to attend the funeral services for the boy, according to Bronson Alcott's journal.

Later in 1859 on October 30 while his wife, Maria, was visiting her parents in Chelsea, Minot attended a passionate speech that Thoreau gave to the town about John Brown, who had been captured on October 18 at Harper's Ferry (at that time in Virginia, now West Virginia). Immediately upon returning home that evening, Minot wrote a letter (Appendix A) to his wife describing the speech. It is a perceptive, sympathetic yet honest, well-written account that has been reprinted in numerous books after it came to light. It is also one of the few examples where we see Minot communicating personally, as no other personal correspondence has come down to us beyond that with the botanist George Davenport.

The only daughter of Minot and Maria, Caroline Hayden Pratt (1836-1866), was a good friend of the Alcott sisters, especially Elizabeth Alcott of the same age with whom she was a schoolmate and playmate. She is mentioned frequently as "Cary" in the 1846 diary of 10-year-old Elizabeth. In the 1860 U. S. Census Caroline is listed as living with her parents with her occupation as "teacher". Thoreau refers to her a few times in his *Journal* where she brings him barberry flowers, another time a lightning-bug and another time reports to him seeing a bobolink. He called her Miss Pratt or Miss Caroline Pratt. Caroline is also noted repeatedly in the brief diary of Anna (Alcott) Pratt, when Anna and John lived in East Boston and Caroline lived in South Boston. On July 16, 1861, Anna wrote about her: "at night Carrie came to tea. I had an hour's chat with her and couldn't help feeling sorry that with so much to make her thankful and so many kind friends she should get so little happiness out of her life. She is a good, affectionate girl, but of that unfortunate temperment [sic] that can only find happiness in

excitement." She died young of heart disease four years after Thoreau's death.

Minot presently is perhaps best known as the father of his second oldest son, John Bridge Pratt, who married Anna Bronson Alcott, the elder sister of Louisa May Alcott. The marriage was performed on May 23, 1860, in the Orchard House of the Alcotts in Concord. Anna's account of their early married life is touchingly portrayed in her brief diary (see Sources). John and Anna gave Minot and Maria two grandchildren, Frederick Alcott Pratt (1863-1910) and John Sewall Pratt (1865-1923) - the latter adopted by Louisa May Alcott and name changed to John Sewall Pratt Alcott.

John Bridge Pratt
Courtesy of Donna Keeler

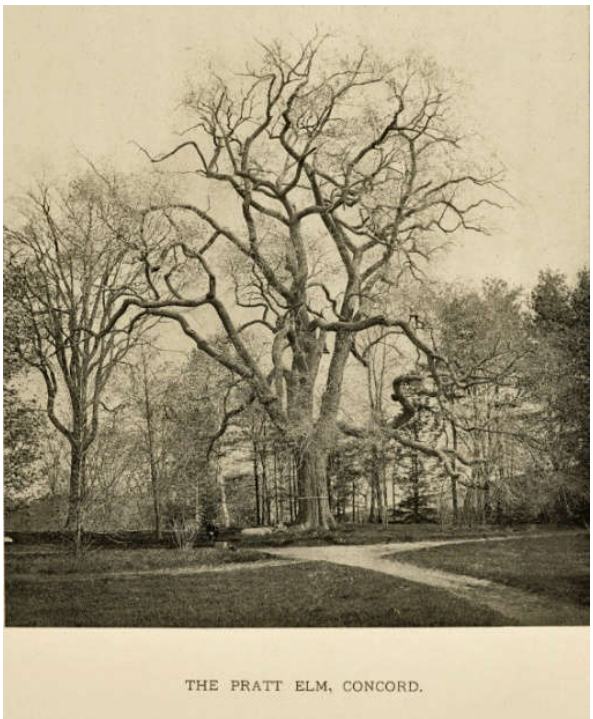
Misfortune struck the Pratts again when John Bridge Pratt died of pneumonia on November 27, 1870, at age 37. His occupation at the time was given as bookkeeper. Thus, sadly, Minot and Maria outlived all but one of their children.

Remembrances of Minot are fewer from his longer stay in Concord than the four years at Brook Farm. But they too are warm and admiring remembrances. Annie Sawyer Downs wrote:

"Mr. Pratt, whose appearance was noticeable even in Concord, as no matter what the season, he always wore a straw hat and seldom even an inside coat, was the delight of every child who knew him, and what child did not? 'Mr. Pratt, Mr. Pratt, has that field mouse built his nest in your mowing field this year?' 'Mr. Pratt, we have to find out before tomorrow afternoon how many goldenrods grow in Concord, please tell us right off.' Or 'Mr. Pratt, did the white owl really say, "How der do" to you?' are specimens of the questions hurled at him in every street .... Once a year the Pratts gave a picnic to which all Concord high and low, rich and poor, old and young, wise and foolish, trooped in a long procession."

The annual picnics Downs referred to might have included the ones of which George W. Cooke wrote: "For several years Pratt was in the habit of gathering on the lawn in front of his house, under a large elm tree, a picnic of such of his Brook Farm associates as he could bring together. Emerson, Phillips, Thoreau, Curtis, George Bradford and others of note, often attended. The gathering was a delightful one, and it was made an occasion of happy reminiscences and a renewal of old personal ties and affections."

The elm under which the picnics were held is pictured below. It so impressed Thoreau that he described and sketched it in his *Journal* on January 4, 1853. It was still standing in 1917.



From *Typical Elms and Other Trees of Massachusetts* (1890)
by Henry Brooks, Lorin L. Dame, and Oliver Wendell Holmes
(view from Pratt home)

Minot was very fond of reading on religious topics. The last book he read was James Freeman Clark's *Ten Religions*. After coming to Concord he attended church but little, although he was personally religious. After he had been at work among his plants he was wont to say that he had been to church. He much preferred plain home singing to elaborate music. "He was more industrious than ambitious," and had no use for developing a skill to make money. Nonsense and frivolity were distasteful to him. "He was happy in the affections of his wife, his children and his grand-children, but he would have been cheerful even in solitude." In spite of his reserved nature he had pronounced opinions and could deliver a rebuke in a kindly manner when he deemed it necessary. He was greatly interested in temperance, referring repeatedly to smoking as "that vile habit." Quotes in this paragraph are from anonymous quotations in the obituary of Minot that was published in *The Concord Freeman* on April 25, 1878.

When Minot's final illness came to him he occupied himself in his sick room planting seeds and doing other window garden work up until a few weeks before he passed away. Minot Pratt died of diabetes in Concord on March 29, 1878, at age 73. Franklin Sanborn wrote: "His patient hope in his last sickness was that he might live till the flowers should bloom again, and the crocuses made haste to blossom in his dooryard, as friendly hands bore him to his Concord grave." Poems for the occasion were written and read by Louisa May Alcott (Appendix D) and his former pastor in Chelsea, Samuel Dowse Robbins (Appendix E). He was buried in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Concord with no marker for him for more than a century, perhaps in keeping with his modesty. The plot on Ridge Path is near that of the Alcotts, Emerson, Thoreau and Hawthorne. With him are his wife, Maria, who survived him until her passing in 1891, their oldest son, Frederick Gray Pratt, and his wife, their daughter Caroline, and their youngest son, Theodore, whose body was moved from its grave on their farm. Their son John Bridge Pratt is buried separately nearby with his wife Anna. In 2017 the plot with Minot and his family was finally given a marker next to the headstone of their son Frederick, as shown below. The floral images in the upper corners of the family grave marker are of the calla lily with flowers of the same shape as the related Wild Calla (*Calla palustris*) with which Minot had acquainted Thoreau in Concord.

PRATT
MINOT PRATT
JANUARY 8, 1805 - MARCH 29, 1878
MARIA (BRIDGE) PRATT
MARCH 27, 1806 - MAY 17, 1891
FREDERICK GRAY PRATT
APRIL 2, 1831 - JANUARY 26, 1905
SARAH (EMERY) PRATT
MARCH 4, 1833 - AUGUST 21, 1879
CAROLINE HAYDEN PRATT
NOVEMBER 9, 1836 - JULY 10, 1866
THEODORE PARKER PRATT
JULY 2, 1842 - MARCH 20, 1859
Grave markers for the Pratt family and Frederick Gray Pratt at Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Concord, MA (2017)

In May 1878 Minot's good botanical friend, George Davenport, composed a long, effusive, heartfelt, spiritual poem in Minot's honor entitled "In Memoriam" (Appendix F) and published in *The Concord Freeman*. In that same year Minot's eldest son, Frederick, presented the Concord Free Public Library with Minot's treasured gift to the town, his manuscript entitled "Plants of Concord."

The essence of Minot Pratt's character perhaps was captured by the recollection of a Brook Farm resident: "No one can ever forget the entire freedom from fret and fume and worry, while he never neglected a duty or failed to accomplish his full share of work. No one can fail to recall how peaceful and free from criticism his life was, with what rare fidelity he estimated his fellows, and how little apparent thought or recognition of self there was in all his actions. Indeed, the loveliness of his spirit shone through the bodily vesture, and his smile itself was a blessing which one might seek to win, and be proud to have gained by one's exertions. His presence, in all the various spheres of active life and industry, had a wonderful educational power upon both old and young; and to the influence of several individuals

of similar beauty of character I attribute the harmony and beauty, in considerable degree, of our Brook Farm life."

Minot Pratt was not a luminary who shone as brightly as other Concordians of his time. But he did not orbit around any of these, maintaining instead his own steady, true course. That these other lights from that era held him in such warm regard should inspire us likewise to admire this humble, honest, soft-spoken, hard-working, kind, thinking, farmer, naturalist and citizen of Concord and Brook Farm.

Acknowledgments

I greatly appreciate the review of the revised version of this work by Richard Higgins, whose professional expertise has significantly improved it. Many thanks to Cherrie Corey for reviewing the first draft of this work and extending permission to use one of her excellent photos. I thank Leslie Wilson of the Concord Free Public Library for granting permission to include in this work the manuscript essay in Appendix B, and her successor, Anke Voss, for facilitating permission to use the image of Frederick Pratt. Jessie Hopper and the late Conni Manoli, also of the Concord Free Public Library, were very helpful in providing Minot Pratt information, especially the finding of the Louisa May Alcott poem by Jessie Hopper. Ned Reynolds, with Pratts in his ancestry, kindly shared some of his genealogical information.

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Appendix A

Letter from Minot Pratt to Maria Pratt, dated October 30, 1859, published in the *Concord Journal* of December 8, 1932, by Mrs. Frederick Alcott Pratt; original letter is now among the Louisa May Alcott papers of Houghton Library, Harvard University

October 30, '59

Dear Maria,

I hope you are enjoying your visit, and making yourself useful in Chelsea. [Chelsea, Massachusetts, where Maria's parents lived] We are having a nice time here, every thing going on smoothly and comfortably. I have just returned, (most 10 o'clock) from hearing a sort of

lecture from Henry Thoreau, on the subject of the affair at Harper's Ferry, or rather on the character of Capt. Brown. [John Brown] Henry spoke of him in terms of the most unqualified eulogy. I never heard him before speak so much in praise of any man, and did not know that his sympathies were so strong in favor of the poor slave. He thinks Capt. Brown has displayed heroic qualities that will cause him to be remembered wherever and whenever true heroism is admired. The lecture was full of Henry's quaint and strong expressions: hitting the politicians in the hardest manner, and showing but little of that veneration which is due to our beloved President [James Buchanan] and all the government officials, who are laboring so hard and so disinterestedly for the welfare of the dear people. The church also, as a body, came in for a share of the whipping, and it was laid on right earnestly. In the course of his remarks on Capt. Brown's heroic character, and actions in the service of freedom and the probability of his being killed therefor, he said he had been very strongly impressed with the possibility of a man's dying -- very few men, can die -- they never lived, how then can they die! The life they lived was not life -- that constant endeavor after self-gratification, with no high aspiration and effort for the race, was too mean an existence to be called life. Brown was a man of ideas and action; whatever he saw to be right, that he endeavored to do with energy, without counting the cost to himself. Such a real, live man could die.

The lecture was full of noble, manly ideas, though, perhaps, a little extravagant in its eulogy of Capt. Brown.

With much love to yourself and all others, and strong hopes for the convalescence of the sick, and the continued health of the well.

Minot.

Appendix B

Flowers and Flower Culture
by Minot Pratt

essay read at Concord Farmers' Club meeting of March 7, 1861, and to the students of the high school in Concord during the 1860-61 school year, handwritten copy in the bound Club records at the Concord Free Public Library, transcribed by Ray Angelo [spelling not corrected, some punctuation adjusted]

Published by permission of the Concord Free Public Library.

Man is born into a world of beauty with faculties capable of appreciating & enjoying it. If his home is in the country, his eye brings to him pictures of flowers & green fields, of wooded hills, of quiet rivers stretching like threads of silver through seas of emerald. His ear gives him the song of birds, the hum of insect life, the lively rattle of the brook, and the deep, soft organ tones of the pines, as their leaves are moved by the summer breeze. It would be passing strange if those to whom nature's best music is thus a daily experience, before whom her infinitely various forms of beauty are continually spread, who breathe her airs laden with the perfume of apple blossoms & clover, should not learn to love her. Yet we often hear it said that farmers to whom more than to most others, nature displays her loveliest features who have but to open their eyes to see the more glorious forms of loveliness, do not appreciate and feel this ever fresh, ever varying beauty,

that they are necessitated by their condition to a life of such wearying toil, as inevitably cuts them off from all possible culture of a love of the beautiful in nature, that they are obliged to dig & grub so hard for the very bare means of keeping life in the body, as to render it impossible, or at best unlikely that they can know enough of the true delights & uses of life, to make life desirable. It is hardly worthwhile to deny here that the farmer is and needs to be a hardworking man. If he does not often work till he is weary, he must have either a tough back or a lazy one. But I don't acknowledge, nor do I believe, that he needs to toil so excessively, that his life may be described to consist merely of labor, eating & sleeping, thence no such men among us. But we can count many who take pleasure in looking on beautiful objects, who are interested in the cultivation of his higher faculties in themselves & their children, who spend liberally of their means, to provide nourishment for that inner self which is the true man.

Still it may be confessed that we sometimes hear, even among farmers themselves, talk that would seem to imply their utter devotion to the acquisition of gold. You would hardly suspect they thought life had any other object. They seem to place no value on anything that cannot be represented by dollars & cents. Their worship is apparently given to golden images. Had they been with Moses in the wilderness, they would have bowed down to the golden calf -- if they could have put it in their pocket afterwards, but here they content themselves with golden images of the eagle when they can get them. At other times they will adore silver & even copper. It is but fair however to give some of them credit for an appreciation of at least one of the fine arts. They do heartily admire pictures, especially those printed on small oblong pieces of thin paper with a V, an X. an L, or even a C principally displayed in a corner, and illegible pen marks at the bottom that are supposed to stand for the names of promising individuals representing the association that distributes these pictures for the public good. But I am not quite certain that we as farmers are in exclusive possession of these traits of character. There is a rumour abroad that Boston today contains some men who would choose a golden eagle in preference to a garden full of the most rare and beautiful flowers.

I believe that nearly every man, woman & child has a natural love of flowers, & not strongly developed in all, but still existing. No one can fan through our villages in N. England & by the scattered homesteads of the farmers without feeling that this love is almost universal. It is evidenced by the little garden, by the rosebushes by the front door, by the flower pots at the windows, by the flowers in the hands of the little children plodding to school, their eyes beaming with delight as they look upon their precious love offerings to the teacher, & you will often find the pulpits of your churches occupied by these assistant preachers eloquently holding forth on the love of God. And not unfrequently the flower bed is found when least expected. I was once looking around the home of a thrifty farmer who is generally believed to be exclusively devoted to money making. A patch of carefully tended flowers attracted my attention & of course I went to examine it. The owner apologized for the waste of good ground. His wife and daughter a few years ago began with a single small bed, but year after year it had kept on increasing, and he did not know when they would be satisfied. I expressed my strong conviction that he had not on his whole farm another piece of equal size that was equally profitable. He looked puzzled as if wondering what the profit amounted to, & where it has to be found. It was easy to see that he had never received a single cent for any thing that ever grew there. But when asked if his wife & daughter did not receive a great enjoyment from its cultivation, and if that enjoyment being of a pure & elevating nature was not of itself a large income from so small an outlay, he at once acknowledged the receipt of some profit in that way. And it was quite evident that he himself really enjoyed the flowers, though there was a sort of fear or feeling that it was not very sensible in a shrewd thriving man to show an interest in anything that would not increase the weight of his money bags. Perhaps it would have been hard for him to believe fully that the profit of the

investment in the flowers bed was more immediately realized than that which came from his potatoes field. Before he really use his income from his potatoes, he must laboriously dig them, carry them to market, fret about the price unless he can get them in just at the earliest season, & then take the money he gets, which is of no use except as an imperfect representative of value to procure these articles of necessity or luxury which he supposes will add to his comfort. But the income from the flowers is received directly & may be enjoyed at once & continually. You have but to look on them & they blossom. They are always ready to pay out, & the oftener you draw on them for a dividend, the more generous are the returns furnished. The spirit feeds on their beauty and fragrance and is strengthened. Their influence is felt throughout every nerve and fibre of the heart. The soul is made more pure, more loving, more reverent towards Him who has spread the earth with such beauty, & given us faculties to see, appreciate & enjoy it. Every flower of the field & garden is a revelation of his wisdom & skill, a gratuitous part declaring & illustrating the essential love of his nature, which may well be studied with reverent care & patient industry. They are illuminated editions of the earliest treatises of theology translated into a universal language that may be read by all nations, by Christian, Mussulman or Pagan & each may draw from them pure spiritual delight & nourishment. They are eloquent preachers standing in the glorious temple of nature & always ready to give their pleasant and inspiring suggestions to rich & poor, to wise & unlearned, to old & young. They have a voice for all. They impart hope to the sad, increase joy to the happy, rest to the weary of heart. The hardworking farmer coming home of a summer evening with an ache in every joint of his spine forgets his fatigue as he walks among the bright faces of his wife's flowers inhaling their fragrance. His weary wife at the close of washing day, after having scrubbed from her husband's linen the dirt & sweat that seemed to have become a part of the very texture of the cloth, steps out into her garden, & the flowers that she has nurtured & labored for with a motherly care & tenderness, smile on her; her spirit is annointed with the refined essence of the balm of a thousand flowers & not that which is sold in the Apothecaries Shop, & to her, weariness passes away, & she moves about refreshed & strengthened. The daughter coming home from the confined air of the school room to the free & fragrant atmosphere of the fields, from pushing her brain over Green's Analysis, to resting her eyes on green leaves & many tinted flowers, from scanning the poetry of Virgil to reading the poetry of nature, from poring over fractions and partial payments to a quiet enjoyment of the free and instructive outgivings of her friends in the garden, from trimming the grammar & cutting out the expletives of her composition to seeding & training her roses & sweet peas, her mignonette and carnations, and so she also is cheered & strengthened for the labor of the morrow. At such times do any grudge the little cut of the flower garden? Would they not then rather enlarge its borders? Do they not then feel that it is good to have one thing around them the result of which is not directly connected in their thoughts with dollars & cents? Trust the time is not far off when it will be difficult if not impossible to find a homestead in the country that has not a bountiful array of cultivated flowers somewhere around it. I am not particularly desirous of seeing every little flower garden laid out with such an extra effort for artistic effort as to make it mainly an arrangement of walks and borders. Still there is abundant opportunity for the exercise of skill & good taste in arranging it such as to display the flowers to the best effect. I confess to a preference to the flowers themselves rather than that which contains the flowers. If no more extensive arrangement is convenient, a single border each side of the walk leading to the front door is better than none.

But if about to select a spot for the purpose, I would try to find one that is sheltered from high winds & well exposed to the warm sunshine in good strong deep soil, of a texture not so clayey as to cake in hot weather nor so sandy as to let the rains filter rapidly thru it. I would also seek to locate it where it might be easily extended when a larger space is desired, for these

flower gardens are much disposed to grow. To prepare it for the flowers it should be made rich by a liberal use of old compost, which ought to be deeply & evenly worked into the soil. It may then be laid out in a style depending on its size, shape & evenness of surface & on the character of the plants it is proposed to set in it. As to filling the garden with plants when it is prepared, that is not necessarily a difficult or expensive job. Neighbors who have flowers are always glad to impart them to others. Many of the perennial sorts increase so fast that they have to be divided & a large part thrown away if no one stands ready to take them. So that from one garden a start might be given to half a dozen others & no loss be sustained. There is a beautiful fable told of the plant known by the name ragged robin, that it refuses to thrive in your garden unless you give the half of it away each year. Some poet has given a similar in favor of this neighborly sharing of the good things bestowed upon us, when he says of health in general that what we keep we love, & what we give away is laid up for us in heaven. These same neighbors always save more than they themselves want of the seeds of their choice plants, & will be pleased to spare some of them, or even some of the young plants from their seed beds in spring. It is not necessary that the garden should be extensive and contain a large variety of rare & costly flowers with names hard to remember & harder to pronounce to give pleasure to the owner. There is in this neighborhood a small home with a front yard of but little more than a square rod of ground that contained last summer a cinnamon rose bush, three or four dahlias of different colors, a coreopsis or two, & a few other shrubs and annuals that you would hardly expect much of, yet because under the loving care of a woman who works as hard as any of us, made really a beautiful display, exciting the admiration of many a passerby, & I have no doubt gave more pleasure to the family than some rich & extensive gardens full of choice exotics gave to their aristocratic owners.

I shall not attempt to give a list of all the desirable flowers. The genera of those cultivated are too numerous to mention, & to merely name the varieties produced by gardens would be hard labor for one evening. In a catalogue of roses offered for sale at one nursery fifteen years ago I counted 225 named varieties. In a catalogue of herbaceous plants printed ten or 12 years since nearly 50 varieties of the perennial Phlox, upwards of 20 of Peonies, & 30 of Hyacinths & of dahlias, the author speaks of having received more than 100 new varieties the present season.

No doubt the number of these has been greatly enlarged within the last ten years, tho many of the old varieties have been dropped as new ones have been brought forward, & no one person would now undertake to cultivate a hundredth part of those offered for sale. But among the infinite varieties of taste in cultivation, room will be found for all of them to grow. Of those with which I happen to be more or less acquainted I will name a few that I would not willingly be without. The snowdrop, Lily of valley, crocus, Tulip, are hardy & early & worthy of a place in every garden. These & the common Pinks, Sweet William, Valerian, dielytra, monkshood, ragged robbin & phlox are beautiful perennials & when once introduced are easily preserved. The feverfew is also a beautiful perennial but it needs protection in winter, tho it has with us lived out one winter without any intentional protection on our part. The Mexican tassel flower is in our estimation one of the finest flowers in the garden. Its color is a very delicate lavender blue. The plant grows luxuriantly & bears an abundance of flowers all the summer. But it is tender & needs to be potted & taken into the home before the first frost. It is easily propagated by cuttings.

The Chinese pink flowering the first year from the seed with slight protection, the 2d year also, sporting in every variety of color, is surpassingly rich & brilliant. The Melilot or Sweetscented Clover is a desirable plant on account of the fragrance & beauty of its flowers, as well as for the fine appearance of the whole plant. We had one plant last year which sent up 21 stems about half of which were within an inch or two of 8 feet high, the others from 3 to 5 feet. Every stem bore numerous branches and at the tip of every branch & branchlet was a spike of

male white flowers, making altogether a mass of flower & foliage beautiful to look upon. I have no doubt there were at least a thousand of these spikes of flowers on this one plant all the time during the months of August & September.

Of the annuals first on the list I would place the sweet pea. This is a favorite I believe with all who have given it a place. It is hardy as the common pea & a pea blooms from the middle of June to September on a row of only 7 feet in length. I counted at one time upwards of 900 blossoms. The rose colored flowers harmonized beautifully with the green leaves. It was a delight to the eye to look upon them. They were always ready morn, noon & evening to greet the visitor with a kindly smile. The vines began to show their blossoms when about 2 feet high & continued to send out buds & blossoms till they had climbed 7 feet & cold weather checked their luxuriance. From such a mass of flowers a pleasant fragrance was perceptible for a considerable distance, especially in the calm evenings.

By the side of this row of sweet peas we sowed a small circle of the common morning glory. The plants started as though they intended to climb industriously, and a pole standing 12 feet above ground was set for them, much to the amusement of a lady who was visiting us at the time & who laughed at the idea of so long a pole standing up above the possible attainment of the ambitious climber. But before the end of August the top of the pole was reached, & I believe the vines grew to more than the length of 20 feet before they were finally stopped by the frost. They flowered profusely, repeatedly showing from 70 to 95 of their bright pink & purple eyes as round this single pole - looking their Cheerful good morning from among the green leaves. Their flowers were abundant from the last of July to the middle of Sept.

The four o'clk, a fine showy flower, prolific & fragrant. The Larkspur, balsam aster, portulacca in their various colours are not to be neglected. The nemophila doing best when partially shaded is a fine delicate flower, sprinkled with dark spots on a ground of the lightest blue. The mignonette valued chiefly for its fragrance. The sweet alyssum fragrant & beautiful. That universal favorite, the pansy. The tassel flower. The tri- coloured gilia. The little blue forget-me-not, all these are reckoned indispensible tenants of our flower garden. The centranthe's giving numerous clusters of a small pink flower, is a beautiful plant, & likely to become a favorite. It continued in bloom last season till the ground froze. The canary & cypress vines are fine plants. We always place the canary vines by the side of a young tree, where it can climb some ten or twelve feet. Its light green leaves & pale yellow flowers, resembling a small bird on the wing, look very beautiful mingled with the darker foliage of the supporting tree. Every garden needs also some of the small flowering shrubs. The rows will be considered by all a positive necessity. The variety of these is so great, that it is difficult to name the more desirable. A moss rose or two, the small white Scotch, the old English white, the Madame Hardy, the Baltimore belle, the Superba, all are very beautiful. So is the Mrs. Pierce in an eminent degree. The latter is a free grower, a prolific bloomer, & the flowers are of a fine shape, & light blush colour. These I have named are mostly white. For the best effect, they will need some of the darker varieties mixed in -- these are easily obtained. Our common wild Sweetbriar rose is well worth a good place, under the window or somewhere near the house for its exceeding beauty & delightful fragrance.

Among other flowering shrubs I will name the mezereon, perhaps the very earliest to blossom -- in Spring. The Tartarean honeysuckle, the weigelia, the Calycanthus prized for its Strawberry-like fragrance. The Althea, the rhododendron, & the mountain laurel. Any of these for which there is room would make a good return for their cost, & many of the thousands I have not named may be even more desirable. I am quite aware that this is but a meagre list of cultivated flowers. But they are sufficient to fill a small garden, every cultivator of flowers is continually learning of some new plant, and thus changes are made. Old ones are dropped & the new ones, not more beautiful, only nearer, are adopted into their plans. This is well, as it keeps up an

interest in the garden & it will be better cared for & tended, & enjoyed more, & thus greater benefit will be derived from it.

It was my intention to give some attention to our beautiful wild flowers. But as I have already occupied more time than belonged to me. I will stop here.

Appendix C

The Farmer's Compensation
by Minot Pratt

read at the November 13, 1862, meeting of the Concord Farmers' Club
(Concord Farmers' Club records at the Concord Free Public Library)
published in the Boston newspaper *Commonwealth* in two parts, April 10, 1863, and April 17, 1863, under the pseudonym "A Concord Farmer"

My subject was suggested by an article that appeared in the Atlantic Monthly several years ago, containing a smart and quite readable caricature of life on the farm [probably "Farming Life in New England" by J.G. Holland, Atlantic Monthly 2:334-341 (August 1858), which criticized the narrowness and drudgery of farm life]. While feeling that there was really much ground for many of the statements made by that writer, I was led to look at the matter with some care to see if there were not compensating circumstances to set against the acknowledged evils or inconveniences. I could not believe that so large a class of the human family were necessarily living in such a miserable condition as he depicted, for I had looked at the matter with different eyes, or from a different point of view. I had enjoyed life reasonably well— as well as I deserved, no doubt— and had seen comfort and happiness among my neighbors. In looking into the condition of things around us, I have been led to believe more strongly than before, that our lot is not, on the whole, a peculiarly hard one. Whether some things disturb us or not, depends on how we take them,— something on habit. I have often thought, when breathing the atmosphere about the wharves of the cities, the atmosphere breathed by the "merchant princes," that the gases of our barns and manure heaps are in comparison sweet as the spicy breezes that "blow soft o'er Ceylon's isle." But these merchant princes inhale the odor of the docks day after day, year after year, and we hear no complaint from them on that score; we know not but they enjoy it. We have trials and annoyances that specially belong to our business; so has the merchant, the mechanic, the minister, the lawyer, the doctor, and possibly the politician. The true course for us is to face them, overcoming what can be overcome, manfully bearing what is inevitable; and using the privileges that belong to us. If we fail to obtain a satisfactory compensation in coin for the pocket, we must accept that which gratifies, quickens and refines the heart. If any one cannot find the same compensation that I see and enjoy, he may get it in another direction. I speak only for myself, and leave others to look where the promise is most to their taste.

The opinion prevails to some extent that the life of a hard-working farmer is almost entirely, and of inevitable necessity, made up of disagreeable as well as wearying labor; that only by incessant and severe toil, prolonged to the utmost limit of the toiler's ability to endure, can he eke out the bare means of sustaining his animal life. We are told that he cannot reasonably hope for the means of cultivating the inner graces that serve to polish the outer man, or to enjoy the refined pleasures so confidently assumed to belong almost exclusively to the more wealthy and

genteel classes of the city. We do not intend to disparage the culture and refinement of any other class; but one who has long labored on a farm, and often labored, too, till his weary back gave emphatic token that it was overtasked, even till its joints would seem to grate and almost audibly creak at the bending, may, perhaps, be excused for attempting briefly to set forth, or suggest, in a somewhat rambling way, some of the compensating circumstances that to him far more than balance the hardships of his lot.

We are ready to assert that the proportion of those who are really cultivated and refined in taste, is as great among the farmers of Massachusetts as among those who have gone into the professions and the workshops and tradeshops of the cities and villages. The desire to amass wealth, the competitions, and rivalries, and ambitions, there so active, are probably not less unfavorable to a cultivation of the true aesthetics of life (justly distinguished in some respects from the conventional) than are the labors and struggles of the farmer. It is true we cannot all, like some of the merchant princes and eminently successful mechanics and professional men, fill our houses with works of high art— paintings, statuary, and rare and costly productions of far away countries, such as only the wealthy can purchase. But he whose eyes are opened to see the wonders that crowd around him and demand attention in the country has no occasion to be envious of any one. He has a larger gallery of pictures, a more extensive museum of curious productions of skill, than his wealthy brother in the city. In the germination of seeds, in the growth of plants, in flower and fruit, in bird and insect, the thoughtful mind may find subjects of interest to occupy the leisure hours of a lifetime. He needs but to look straight forward to see such pictures as no mortal painter can equal, landscapes so beautiful that they will impress themselves upon his brain and heart, in lines that can never be effaced. The home of his childhood abounds with these pleasant pictures. Wherever he may go in after years, those apple orchards, rosy with blossoms in spring and bending with their burden of fruit in autumn, those fields of soft spring grass, of blooming clover, of waving gram, those hills and valleys gorgeous with their various autumnal tints, those glorious sunsets lustrous with gold-edged clouds; those not less glorious sunrises, belonging almost exclusively to the early-rising farmer, will be remembered and loved for their beauty.

We admire many of the pictures of landscapes which artists have placed on canvass; we acknowledge them beautiful and delight to look upon them. They sometimes seem to be almost real. At first sight they so nearly resemble real trees and grass and flowers, that we listen for the hum of insect life, we look to see the bees sipping honey from the apple blossoms, and the birds pecking at the fruit. But they exhale no pleasant odors, the birds and the bees are not there. And on closer inspection we find so many imperfections, so many failures to give the true forms and colors of nature, that we may be excused for some feeling of disappointment. Yet we do not cease to wonder at the skill of the artist. We are surprised that he is able so variously to combine a few simple pigments as to produce all the beautiful tints which his canvass exhibits, and arrange them in his pictures of life to give expression to glowing thoughts and intense emotions. Still they are not life; they are only images of one phase of life, as seen in one unvarying degree of light and shade and they must ever remain just what the artist's pencil left them. They may seem to be on the point of doing something, but they never do it. They promise, but do not perform.

But Nature, in her grand studio, produces quite a different picture. She skillfully combines certain salts, and acids, and gases, in varying proportions, pours on them her glorious sunshine, and, lo, we have a landscape of a thousand acres, comprising rock and river, hill and valley, grove and meadow, flower and fruit, cows grazing upon the hills, birds singing in the trees, and butterflies sailing from flower to flower; with infinite variety in the coloring, ever changing, and beautiful in all lights. And as to her life pictures—her forms of human beauty. With such homely

materials as milk and bread, potato and cabbage, apple and cherry, beef and chicken, with, in rare cases, a slight admixture of pepper and vinegar, worked over in her vital laboratory in combination with pure country air, she finds means for developing on her *tabula rasa* those living forms of beauty and grace, that so stir the hearts of us all. She gives a delicacy of coloring that the queenliest of roses in vain attempts so imitate; a sparkle to the eye which Venus cannot equal on the bluest winter evening sky; a sweetness to the lips which the bee would take for honey were it not so much sweeter than what it finds in the flowers of the field; a radiant sunshine to the countenance, beaming out from its source in the heart, and sending light and joy into the gloomiest soul within its sphere of influence.

We would not undervalue the creations and imitations of the human artist. We would like to have his works ever about us. They have a refining and elevating influence that cannot fail to make us better, and add to our enjoyments. But if we must choose between the artificial and the natural, give us what kind nature so liberally spreads about us, that which is open and free for the enjoyment of all.

The farmer's family is certainly surrounded by abundant means of cultivating and gratifying a love of the beautiful. Even from our kitchen window we can show, on any October day, a picture that the most gifted limner cannot reproduce. There is nothing very uncommon about it, no one thing to attract special attention; it is the arrangement, the grouping, the shading that makes it fine. It is only a hill crowned with pines, with oaks of various kinds, hickories and chestnuts scattered about, their many-tinted leaves here and there peeping out from the dark ground-work; and in the foreground, half way up the hill, the lighter-hued foliage of the white birches shakes off the afternoon sunshine as their lithe stems are swayed by the breeze. This picture is beautiful every day. Its hues have been changing continually, from the tender and soft green of early spring till autumn has touched and ripened the leaves, and they gleam out their finest just before passing from sight, their swan song photographed in brilliant though fading colors.

Or suppose it is a beautiful Sunday in June; one of the most lovely days of that sweet month, and "then, if ever, come perfect days." We walk to the hill top near by [Punkatasset Hill in Concord, Massachusetts], to an opening in the crowning woods. No sound of busy men, eager in the pursuit of wealth, grates upon the ear. Only the rustling of the leaves beneath our feet, with an occasional gush of bird song mingled with the hum of insect wings and the low murmur of the west wind is heard. Our souls are in that state when every thing in nature seems to overflow with a perfect harmony. Our hearts are full of gladness: "almost we fear to think how glad we are." The trees above us give a grateful shade. We are regaled by pleasant odors cunningly distilled from the leaves of the forest. The green grass and trees, variously shaded, give delight to the eye. We look through an opening in the branches, over an apple orchard, to the broad river meadows beyond. There lies a sea of moulten emerald, its surface waved by the west wind, and shadows of cloudlets floating over it continually, breaking the uniformity of its hue. On the hither side the river [Concord River] winds along so gently, that even if standing on its banks, you would hardly perceive the water move, its margin fringed with maples and willows and dotted with clusters of the button bush and swamp rose, till it sweeps around those wooded hills and disappears. Bordering the opposite side of the meadows spread extensive woods, oak and maple and pine, over the top of which we see a pretty village, and scattered farm houses half hidden by ancient elms, and green fields giving evidence of the thrift of the sturdy occupants, and farther away, church spires, dimly visible above the dark green woods, tell of cosy hamlets, the homes of peace and content, nestling among the hills and valleys.

Let us on this same June Sabbath press into service our sure-footed and trust-worthy old horse, "Lady Lightfoot," (so named by antiphrasis,) and drive to the First Church— the forest

temple— and there reverently worship Him whose works are all good and beautiful. "The groves were God's first temple." Our four-footed companion has often led us there. She is familiar with the wild and rough wood paths; most familiar with the wildest and roughest. We will go round by the little wood lake, Walden. As we turn from the highway to the by-way we pass along a high ridge, whence we look down over the top of the young wood upon the smooth and shining face of the lakelet, deep set among the surrounding hills. These hills, forming a high and steep wall for much of the way around this isolated sheet of water, are densely wooded from summit to base; and are reflected from the water, thus fringing it with a darker border. Our considerate Lady Lightfoot passes on slowly into the shade of the older forest, giving time to scan the changing phases of the woodland beauty, and to enjoy the music of the forest choir, as, flitting among the leaves or perched on the branches overhead, they give voice to their and our joy and gratitude. So winds our path, now beneath old and moss-covered trees whose trunks support a leafy, open-worked canopy high above our heads; now across the rail-road, where on other days the sylvan quiet is disturbed by the earthquake tread of the giant iron horse; now passing warm sunny openings thickly covered by a soft grass; now at the foot of a cliff that frowns grandly over the forest at its base. Here seems to be a possible path; let us clamber up. The summit of the hill [Fair Haven Hill] has been recently cleared of a heavy forest growth, and is now a luxuriant clover field. Many of the old stumps remain, and the lot is dotted over with little heaps of cobble-stones, which look picturesque as they peep above the verdure and blossoms of the clover. We will take our stand on the highest point, high enough to give us a broad view, with our faces to the south. On our left, as we look down over the woods, we catch glimpses of the little wood lake we passed on our way, seemingly more deeply bedded in its emerald setting than when we before saw it. The sunlight sparkles from the wavelets on its surface, which is now moved by a soft west wind that has dropped down to dally with it in passing. On the right, the river [Sudbury River] glides along in graceful windings, spreading out just beneath us into a broad lake [Fair Haven Bay], fringed like the river with trees and bushes, which serve to vary the hues of the water. Near the sloping banks of the lagoon on one side, an old house and barn, deserted and in ruins, now far away from all human habitation, are suggestive of the olden time, running back to the days when the red man hunted and fished here. On the other side, a rocky ledge [Bittern Cliff/Conantum Cliffs], crowned with pines, juts out near the margin of the water, advancing and retreating, forming little sheltered and cosy nooks in shade and sunshine, where the pioneers of the early spring flowers timidly peep out before the snow has melted from the fields, to see if winter has really retired. Here, too, one may retire and bathe his spirit in poetical imaginations, or perchance pore over the dim records of ante-saurian times, asking of the rocks when and how they were formed, and how and when they were uplifted from the depths of earth. On the north lies our own dear, delightful village [Concord, Massachusetts], enough of itself to form a complete picture to the eyes that look on it with love. Roads lined with shade trees ray off in every direction, leading by the homes of our worthy yeomanry, populous with household and social virtues and Christian graces. The landscape in this direction is diversified with hill and valley, river and plain, fading to dimness in the blue distance, and bounded afar off by the mountains of New Hampshire.

On the first day of last November, one of the loveliest days that ever the Good Father gave to his children, with a company of friends who deeply sympathized in our love of nature, we rode over this same path. On reaching Walden, whose shades are now rendered sacred to the memory of our departed friend Thoreau, we were attracted to its quiet shore, where we passed a few moments in admiration of the scene, and in returning to our childish amusement of skipping stones over its slightly ruffled surface, and throwing sticks far as we could from the shore to watch their slow return over the wavelets that soon brought them again within our reach. This

may seem to some of our grave and venerable readers, an amusement more particularly adapted to children. We acknowledge that it is so— and therefore we like it. We never could stand on the shore of a pond without indulging in a few "skips," if there were stones of a suitable shape near by. On leaving the pond we entered a wood road that turns from the highway just beyond Walden. Our course in this rambling ride passed through woods in various stages of growth, from one year old sprouts to venerable and mossy timber trees. The early ripened leaves strewed our path, and rustled as we passed over them; the only sound that broke the intense quietness around. Even the birds, that occasionally flitted about, were reverentially silent. The air was mild as if June and October had united their best efforts to make a perfect day. The light of the sun was softened by an Indian summer haze, that made it agreeable to the eye, though it obstructed the view of distant objects. At such a time this was no place for loquacity. It was for us to be still, and feel the presence of the Divinity. "Lo, God is here." These words, probably from some old hymn ["Lo, God is here! Let us adore" by Gerhard Tersteegen (1729) translated into English by John Wesley], rung continually in our interior ears. We knew they told the truth. "Lo, God is here." This was all we remembered of the hymn, all we cared to remember. Our hearts were satisfied. We felt Him in the serene day, we saw Him in the beauty of the autumn leaves, and joined in the hymn that goes up continually to the Presence that encompasses all and holds all things in the hollow of His hand.

The leaves of the young oak and maple sprouts, surrounded and shut in by taller woods, were of exceeding brilliancy and variety of colors, and gave the landscape the appearance of a large flower garden in profuse bloom. We ascended the path that leads up Fairhaven hill to the Cliffs, and stood on the broad field which the owner has kindly cleared that we might have a clear view of the surrounding scenery. Nature had been doing her best for the landscape. The forest at our feet on the southern side of the hill, was gorgeous with its autumnal tints. Walden, down in its serene valley, was tastefully adorned for the occasion, with gold and emerald and ruby lavishly displayed, their brilliancy softened, not hidden, by a veil of the finest gauze. The river glided on in its placid way, the hills of the neighboring towns as seen through the haze seemed like distant mountains, taking the place of Wachuset and Monadnoc, that show their blue heads only when the atmosphere is clear.

These are some of the pictures which adorn our gallery. There are many others, not less beautiful, which gratify the eye in every direction.

Still more evident is it that we are specially favored in our opportunities, when we obey the Great Teacher's suggestion to "consider the lilies of the field." One who has not been in the way to know them would be surprised at the array of beauty in the wild flowers of our fields and woods. Something beautiful is always to be found from the first of May to the end of October. They are all around us, and ready to be admired. But it may be quite possible for some persons to walk through the woods in early spring and breathe an air impregnated with the sweet odors of the Mayflower *(Epigaea repens*), and not see its rosy face timidly peeping out from among the dry leaves under their feet. It is quite possible, no doubt, for others to look upon an orchard in full bloom, each tree appearing like a giant rose, and only see the promise of an abundant harvest of Baldwin apples in the fall; or to look over broad fields of clover blossoms, only to see whether the crop is ready for the scythe. But when they are sought with a loving heart, the most beautiful blossoms spring up before us, smiling with fond delight, blushing their consent to become one with us, and gratefully mingling their lives with ours. They tell us all manner of sweet and beautiful things, meeting our moods of sadness or gladness, and gently insinuating into us their own cheerful temper. Like other lovely beings they are coy till their confidence is secured. We must approach them with tender care, not crush them beneath our heavy feet, nor rudely tear them from their parent stem. When we have learned to step aside to save a flower in our path,

when we can faithfully keep from those whose hands are rude and destructive the knowledge of the home of a flower that has confidingly revealed itself to us alone, and can walk miles every summer to welcome its smiling face, then will they freely show themselves and greet us.

Every one can find the violets of several of species, (eight distinct species grow on our own little farm) the anemone, the trientalis, a fine flower of a pearly whiteness, beautiful enough to be adopted as the emblem of purity; the twin-flower, Solomon's seal, arethusa, cardinal flower, crane's-bill geranium, and the sweet-brier and other roses. And these, with many others equally common and not less beautiful, would be sufficient to satisfy the lover of flowers, were there not many more, rarer in our region, but handsome enough to repay a long search. Among these we may name, as having been found by persistent seekers in our town, and as likely to be found in many others, the mountain laurel, the buck-bean, the rhodora, the fringed gentian, the Linnaea; and in a small shaking bog, all within the space of two square rods, the Ledum latifolium, the Andromeda polyfolia, the Kalmia glauca, the white fringed Orchis,— all beautiful and rare, — are now found, though the Vandal who claims to own the bog is rapidly pushing his "improvements" in such direction as to threaten destruction to these worthy tenants of his soil. In a wild spot not far away from this, (long may it remain secluded,) the graceful climbing fern, very rare, and the large purple orchis, (Orchis fimbriata of Gray), the most beautiful of the genus, are found.

But without these rarer flowers, there are enough by the roadside and in our fields, where we can see them every day, to excite and to gratify the taste for beauty. And he who does not perceive and enjoy these, can hardly be expected to go far in search of others.

There is another phase of our Northern landscapes, belonging more particularly to the country, which deserves mention. No one who has ever seen it— and who has not?— but must have admired the display of crystal splendor occasionally seen in our New England winter. We wake in the morning, and find that a drizzling mist during the night has collected and frozen to the trees. Every thing is covered by it. No potent Parisian *modiste* has invented and sent over a new fashion of dress; a mightier ruler has commanded, and every tree and shrub and dry herb in the whole region has been provided with a robe of more than imperial brilliancy. Oak and willow, elm and birch, pine and sweet-brier, all have put on the gala dress. Not a stem of dried grass, not a contemned weed, but has been remembered equally with its more lordly neighbor, and glitters in the morning sun with a splendor that dazzles the eye. The renowned Sinbad, while in the diamond valley, trod not on so rich a ground . No jewel merchant of the East ever saw in his dreams so lustrous and lavish a display of wealth. What though the exhibition be brief, and after a few hours of sunshine nothing be left but a mass of broken icicles on the ground? It shone for its allotted time and then submitted to the inevitable law of change. Is it not thus with all earthly wealth? And does not all earthly beauty thus pass away, and give place to other forms of loveliness? When a school boy, a half century ago, our earliest chirographical "copy," told us that "Beauty soon fades." We then understood the proverbial phrase to apply, more especially, to that highest form of beauty with which we were then acquainted, the blue eyes and rosy cheeks of our maiden schoolmates; and that was beauty to be remembered. But even it could not endure unchanged. It has been developed into a higher form, and now adorns the fairer homes of "the better land."

And then, too, we have music, and such music! Not overstrained efforts to produce effect; but real bursts of song, gushes of melody, that come spontaneously from the little hearts of the singers, and touch our larger hearts with a sense of love, joy, beauty. Our *matineé* concerts in April and May cannot be surpassed. As we become conscious of the morning's dawn, we feel the sweet sounds floating in at our open windows, from the galleries in the old elms. Strain after strain, song after song, tells of the renewed joy of the singers. At first not many voices, merely a solo, perhaps; then a duett or a quartette, and new voices break in till gradually swells out a

grand chorus of melody, and the whole vast hall is filled with the lively strains. One familiar with bird language can recognize the good old morning hymn,

"Once more, my Soul, the rising day,
Salutes thy waking eyes;
Once more, my voice, thy tribute pay,
To him who rules the skies,"

jubilantly sung to the tune of Peterboro', with variations.

Not only in the early morning, but at all times of the day, these outbursts of song come to us with their cheering influences. At work in the field, resting at noon in the shade of the elm, or rambling in the woods, not many minutes ever pass without a song. The soft notes of the blue-bird in a spring morning, the inimitable wild melody of the bobolink, the varying imitations of the catbird, (who is, perhaps, our best mockingbird,) the clear, rich tones of the meadowlark and chickadee, and the evening song of the whippoorwill in our dooryard:— all these, and many others less conspicuous, make up a succession of harmony and melody more satisfying , to some ears at least, than much of the ambitiously artistic music of the professors. Who that has lived in the country in childhood does not remember the whippoorwill, that in the pleasant summer evenings used to flit about the yard, now seen and now vanished he could not tell where; then dropping suddenly down just before him, and at once beginning its monotonous but pleasant song? We delight to remember it as heard at our early home on the turnpike, near the woods. There was just before the house a large boulder, or possibly it was a cropping out of the underlying granite ledge— not half so large now as we remember it fifty years ago; and on the top, in a hollow where a little earth had collected, Eliza's flower bed flourished, containing a few pinks, columbines, and lemon balm. There was a swamp, too, in front of the house, in the northeast corner of which one foot of the summer rainbow always rested. Your landscape painter would not have chosen it as a subject for his pencil; but to us it was a beautiful swamp, dotted with clumps of white cedar, alders, and blueberry bushes, with splendid ditches for the little shingle boats to sail in, and here and there half-decayed roots sticking out, resting places for the frogs and turtles who desired to bask in the sunshine. Near the southeasterly corner of this swamp, a little brook, coming from the hills beyond, rattled over a dwarf precipice; and to the soft, murmur of this waterfall, accompanied by the whippoorwill, we have often listened with delight in the hush of the quiet evening air. To our young fancy, this rivulet, falling down its perpendicular wall nearly four feet, represented the Niagaras and Trentons which we were wont to hear mentioned in the geographical recitations of our elder schoolmates. We have since scrambled up a hill of frozen spray directly in front of the American side of Niagara, and, lying down with our head over the brink, but a few feet from the descending water, looked down into the misty darkness and listened to the roar that poured up from the thunder cave under us, so loud as to make any other sound impossible; and are free to confess that Niagara excels in grandeur the waterfall that seemed so large to our childish mind!

And we would not willingly forget those sighing cadences, those softest organ tones, those angel whispers, those hushed spirit voices, more audible to the heart than to the ear, that come to us in our summer rambles among the woods. In a warm day, when the air moves just enough to produce a lulling murmur among the pine boughs overhead, a feeling of perfect rest comes over the soul. Music and fragrance blend harmoniously with the beauty of the flickering sunlight and shadow at our feet; and we hardly know which sense takes in the delight, our whole being is so thoroughly regaled. Those dreamy yet real delights so monopolize our inner self that the outer world's vexations and vanities cannot intrude upon us. For the time we forget the pinchings of

poverty, our hard struggles with the world, the jealousies, the rivalries, the strifes, in which it is our lot to take a part in every day life. We forget our weary labors, our frequent anxieties, about the weather, about the growth of corn and grass, about the markets, and are only conscious of a fullness of joy and peace.

But there are times when the woods, and especially the pines, give forth a grander and more stirring music. When the storm wind is abroad, the notes fall upon us from the hill-top near by like the deep monotone of the sea beach after a storm, subdued by distance; at times nearly as deep-toned, but not so monotonous. This beach roar is among the distinct memories of our childhood. We used to hear it in the hush of evening after an easterly storm, about ten miles from Nantasket. Though its origin was in the wildest strife of the elements, the low but distant murmur impressed us with a sense of peace and rest, akin to that induced by the rainbow after a summer shower. The one told to the eye, the other to the ear, that the storm was ended, and there was a promise and a realization of calmness and peace.

We have not fastidious ears, to be shocked and made uncomfortable by a variation of a quarter of a note in music. We estimate highly the singing of those we love, imperfect as it is when weighed in the artist's scales. Tears of delight often quiver in our eyes at the gushing melody from wife and children, in the quiet and freedom of the home circle, in the plain parlor, or even in the homely kitchen while washing dishes or paring potatoes; and though we well know at the time that not all the tones are entitled to take a place in a "concord of sweet sounds," they yet give us deep gratification. We take them in with a good relish; as, with a strong appetite, we enjoy our plain, wholesome meals, without caring much whether all the dishes were prepared strictly according to scientific rules, or with a grain more or less of pepper or salt, or whether our fork is of silver or steel. It is enough for us that our appetites enable us to partake with pleasure.

Years ago we were present, one autumn evening, in a plain farmer's kitchen. A bright lad and lass, brother and sister, were at a table paring apples. As the apple-parer and the slicing-knife were busily plied, it soon became evident that there was an exuberance of life in the workers, much more than sufficient to furnish motive power to the hands. There was steam enough to work another machine; and the music organ was geared on. Then came an outburst of song, some quaint old ditty, not selected as expressing the mood of the singers, but seized as the first that presented itself, to give vent to the fulness of the heart. Then followed, in rapid succession, strains of love, of patriotism, of devotion, of triumph, of despair,— indeed every imaginable phase of emotion had its turn,— with remembered snatches of opera and oratorio, of glee and chant, of waltz and anthem; from "Nellie Gray" to "Peace Troubled Soul," from "Home, Sweet Home" to " Blue eyed Mary," from " Ave Sanctissima" to "A life on the ocean wave;" and so on for two full hours; and in all that time the apple-paring went on briskly, and the voices ceased not to pour forth their melody with undiminished spirit. As one piece was finished, another would spring to take its place. Memory failed not, voice tired not, and ears were not satiated.

Now we do not claim that this music, if heard in a concert room, would have satisfied an audience. We do not suppose that it would there have satisfied even our uncultivated ear. But there was something in the circumstances, in the lively mood of the singers, in the feeling of the hearts that drank in the music, which gave a charm to the performance that nothing else could give. And we do claim that the free and easy mode of living among farmers is specially favorable to such occasions.

We have thus endeavored to exhibit some of the compensations open to us. Compensations of a different sort may come to others, and give more satisfaction than would these. We do not deny that we have hardships and privations. But with all these, there is much of enjoyment left

for us; enough to make us content with our lot, and to excite compassion for our friends who are shut up in the cities; and this compassion is sometimes heightened by their ignorance of the great ocean of good, whose waves swell so near them. Let them come to us in the country; they may partake of our good, and our store will not be lessened. But they must leave behind their conventional habits of thought and feeling, and look right in the face of Nature as it is. If they will so look, one may safely warrant that they will find enjoyments they have not before dreamed of.

Appendix D

In Memoriam
by Louisa May Alcott, read at the funeral of Minot Pratt and printed in the *Springfield Daily Republican*, April 3, 1878

Silence and sunshine haunt the room,
    And the sweet peace of death, --
    Unmarred by human breath,
Or human tears, and sorrow's gloom.

He seems to lie alone, asleep;
    Now far beyond the reach
    Of tender touch or speech,
Never again to smile or weep.

But sprites from forest, field and dell,
    Too fine for eye or ear
    To look on or hear,
Gather to toll their lover's knell.

Undaunted by chill April skies,
    Fragile and pale and fair,
    Weeping in soft despair,
The spirits of the wild-flowers rise.

'Tis fit they chant his requiem
    Who to their solitudes
    Brought his most genial moods,
Nor ever rudely broke a stem.

"Wait, wait, oh gentle friend of ours!
    Till we, with service sweet,
    Strew for thy weary feet
The homeward path with grateful flowers."

"From all our homes thou wilt be missed,
For never wast thou late,
Nor made thy darlings wait
To keep with thee their yearly tryst."

"Vainly Arbutus dreams of bliss,
Like sleeping beauty hid
'Neath her green coverlid;
Thou canst not wake her with a kiss."

"In the lone marsh where few feet tread,
Rhodora's cheek will pale
When the lamenting gale
Whispers, 'Thy worshiper is dead.' "

"Impatient from the breezy hill,
Like elfin bugle fine,
Calleth gay Columbine;
The voice that answered her is still."

"Along the paths thy hand did store
Watcheth meek Violet,
With blue eyes dim and wet,
For one who cometh nevermore."

"Alas, our wood-god is asleep
No chiming flower-bell
Can break the solemn spell
Of slumber so serene and deep."

"Rest, Rest, unvexed by mortal strife;
No bitter frost can chill,
No blighting storm can kill
The blossom of a lovely life."

"Thy memory shall be our trust;
And herbs of green will bloom
About the quiet tomb,
Where lies the gentle and the just."

Appendix E

Let Me Go, For the Day Breaketh
by Samuel Dowse Robbins, read at the funeral of Minot Pratt and printed in *The Concord Freeman*, April 25, 1878

The waves of light are drifting
    From off the heavenly shore;
The shadows all are lifting
    Away for-ever-more.

Truth like another morning,
    Is beaming on my way;
I bless the Power which poureth in
    The coming of the day.

I feel a life within me,
    That years can never bring;
My heart is full of blossoming;
    It yearns to meet the Spring.

Love fills my soul in all its deeps,
    And harmony divine,
Is sweetly sounding from above,
    A symphony sublime.

The earth is draped in richer green,
    The sky in brighter blue;
And with no cloud to intervene,
    God's smile is shining thro'.

I hear the immortal harps that ring
    Before the rainbow throne.
A spirit from the heart of God
    Is bearing up my own.

In silence, from the Oliver of prayer,
    My soul ascends
'Till in the orison of heaven,
    My voice in worship blends.

Appendix F

In Memoriam
by George E. Davenport of Medford, Massachusetts
from *The Concord Freeman*, May 1878

"None knew him but to love him,
None named him but to praise."

"Only the actions of the just
Smell sweet and blossom in the dust."

"One says, that loss is common to the race.
That loss is common doth not make mine less."

"He was a man;
Take him for all in all,
We ne'er shall look upon his like again,"

Friendship's offering to the memory of a true man,—

MINOT PRATT,

Whose unaffected simplicity of manners, rare tenderness of nature, sweetness of disposition, and integrity of character, endeared him to all who knew him, and whose memory will ever be a precious heritage to those who enjoyed his friendship, and shared with him his love for the wild flowers, and the charms of nature.

O friend, dear friend, henceforth 'twill be
Thy joy to roam through paradise,
Where all unseen by mortal eyes
Unfading flowers will bloom for thee.

He was my friend; and whatsoe'er I knew
In human nature, loveable and true,
In him abounded with superior grace;
The pleasant smile, illumining his face
As morning sunshine lights up wold and hill;
The great warm heart, the sympathetic will,
The generous wish to give to others joy,
The gentle spirit, free from base alloy.
All these were his, and more: the self -control
That cometh not save unto him whose soul
With God and Nature harmonizes, and
Is filled with inspiration, high and grand.

What wonder was it, therefore, that he found
In all created things a joy profound.
And loved the varying moods of Nature more
Than man's uncertain ways, and all the false world's lore.

O Nature, his great love for thee
Was not the passion of a day—
The creature of a sunny hour—
But one that lived and grew alway.
He loved thy meadows, hills and woods
When all his path was strewn with bloom.
Yet shunned thee not when harsher moods
O'ercast thy face with deepening gloom.
Dear Mother Nature, was it this
That made thee hasten to caress
His cold, pale lips with tender kiss?

O, for a tongue of fire;
A touch of heavenly flame
To kindle each desire
To emulate his name:
O, for a breath from Heaven
To breathe the love divine
That unto him was given: —
How would his virtues shine!
Like precious jewels set
In brilliant coronet,
Or planetary star
In brighter worlds afar!

Dear Concord, all thy sacred woods,
Where sunlight gleams, or shadow broods,
Are full of him. His spirit walks
As free as the free air, and talks
To those who comprehend the voice
Of tree and blossom. O, rejoice!
All ye who loved him well,
To know, with me, a spell
Is over Concord laid.
That makes each light and shade
Forever dear to all who hold,
Like him, the works of God more precious far than gold.

O River, clear and bright,
With what supreme delight
I've walked with him along thy devious course;
Each sense alert the while
To catch his sunny smile,
Or learn some precious truth from his discourse.

With love for God his heart
Was filled, and every part
Of the great universe to him seemed given
To fill the soul of man
With reverence for God's plan,
And teach who will may find on earth a heaven.

What wonder, then, that he
Should love each shrub, and tree,
Each beautiful wild flower, and humble weed:
Or nurse with tender care
The daintiest and rare ? —
His nature found in this its highest need.

O ye wild blossoms, odorous and sweet.
And lovely as a dream of paradise.
Who have so often lured his willing feet
To secret haunts unknown to common eyes,
Come, now, and with my verse your sweetness blend,
The while I pay this tribute to my friend.

All seasons honored him.
Wild flowers bloomed for him
In meadow, grove and glen.
They sprang to meet him, when
He sought their favorite haunts
In his frequent woodland jaunts,
And all their lovely faces
Lit up with sweeter graces
At the rustling of the leaves,
At the coming of his feet: —
Now through their perfumes sweet
The low wind sadly grieves.

Open thy lap, O Spring,
And over our dear, dead king
Your sweetest blossoms fling.
Bid all thy wood-nymphs come
From Flora's fairest bowers,
And decorate his tomb
With Nature's rarest flowers.
Come from your hiding place,
Arbutus! Thy flushed face
Grown paler with thy grief,
And every bud and leaf
Moist with thy tears. And thou,
O Blue Hepatica!
Whose radiance makes the brow
Of Nature fairer far
Than fairest maid or star, —
Divine Hepatica!
With pale Cassandra come
And grace his sacred tomb.
O wood Anemone!
O rue Anemone;
Harebell and violet,
Can you his love forget?
O Columbine, and Rue,
Was he not kind and true?

I hear a voice so fine, and low.
That scarce my listening soul doth know
If it be voice or whispering wind
That answers, he was true and kind.

O affluent Summer, bring
Thy grateful offering
And lay it on his tomb: —
Thy roses, sweet and rare,
Thy lilies, pale and fair.
And marvelous wealth of bloom.
Crown him with all thy stars,
O mellow Autumn days.
And when October's haze
Streaks all thy crimson bars,
Over him sadly wave
Thy golden plumes.
For he was good and brave.

O shades of Concord, ye have grown to me
Far dearer than before, and when I see
The purple shadows gathering o'er thy hills,
A growing sadness all my spirit fills:
A sense of something from my life departed,
That leaves me dazed, and sad, and heavy- hearted.
Yet thankful for the friendship I have known,
I murmur not that God hath claimed his own.
O faithful soul, to each high impulse true,
O heart, that ever beat with love divine -
For every living thing thy long life through,
O life well spent, reward well earned is thine.
'Tis thine to roam the blest Elysian fields
Where every moment some new pleasure yields;
Where all thy paths are strewn with deathless flowers,
And holy rapture fills the blissful hours.
O ye who mourn, uncomforted, with grief,
Be this your consolation and relief;
And though each heart with deepest anguish swells;
We'll wreathe his spotless name with Memory's immortelles.

Appendix G

Minot Pratt *genealogy*

compiled by Ray Angelo, 2017
(no person known to be living is listed by name)

1.Thomas Pratt (March 14, 1563, Aston Clinton, England - Oct. 2, 1616, Aston Clinton, England), married Elizabeth Hunt (1566 - 1616, Aston Clinton, England), parents of
2.Mathew Pratt [also called Macute] (Nov. 15, 1595, Aston Clinton, England - Aug. 29, 1672, Weymouth, Mass.) referred to by Cotton Mather in his "Magnalia", as a very religious man, married Elizabeth Kingham (Aug. 17, 1600, Clinton, England - Feb. 18, 1679, Plymouth, Mass.), parents of
3.Joseph Pratt [5th child of Mathew] (June 10, 1637, Weymouth, Mass. - Dec. 24, 1720), married Sarah Judkins (Dec. 7, 1645 - Jan. 14, 1726), parents of
4.John Pratt (May 17, 1668, Weymouth, Mass. - Oct. 3, 1716), married Mercy Newcomb, parents of
5.John Pratt (May 26, 1696, Weymouth, Mass. - June 12, 1769), married Jael Beals (1705 - Jan. 9, 1770), parents of
6.Ezra Pratt (March 25, 1740, Weymouth, Mass. - Nov. 7, 1807), married Abigail Clark (ca. 1745 - April 8, 1822), parents of
7.Bela Pratt (Dec. 30, 1777, Weymouth, Mass. - June 20, 1843, Weymouth, Mass.), extensive builder & contractor, etc., etc., married Sophia Western Lyon (Oct. 23, 1780, Halifax, Mass. - Nov. 5, 1841, Plymouth, Mass.), parents of

8.**Minot Pratt** (Jan. 8, 1805, Weymouth, Mass, - March 29, 1878, Concord, Mass.), married on March 15, 1829 Maria Jones Bridge (March 27, 1806, Boston, Mass - May 17, 1891, Concord, Mass.), parents of

9A.Henry Minot Pratt (Feb. 22, 1830, Hingham, Mass. - Aug. 29, 1830, Hingham, Mass.)

9B.Frederick Gray Pratt (April 2, 1831, Hingham, Mass. - Jan. 26, 1905, Concord, Mass.), married on January 16, 1853 Sarah Maria Emery (March 4, 1833, Dryden, New York - Aug. 21, 1879, Concord, Mass.), parents of

10A.Henry Minot Pratt (Dec. 23, 1853, Meadville, Penn. - June 20, 1925, Saugus, Mass.), married on May 22, 1884 Mary Annie Carr [later given as Annie Mary Pratt] (Sept. 5, 1862, Concord, Mass. - Dec. 30, 1933, Saugus, Mass.), parents of

11A.Henry Carr Pratt (Jan. 21, 1886, Somerville, Mass. - Feb. 26, 1949, Cornish, Maine), married on Aug. 8, 1910 Mary Florence Dillingham (Dec. 27, 1886, Charlestown, Mass. - March 16, 1927, Arlington, Mass.), parents of

12A.Helen Virginia Pratt (April 28, 1916, Brighton, Mass. - July 2, 1981, Somerville, Mass.), married to John S. Chase (ca. 1910, Nova Scotia, Canada - June 30, 1979, Cambridge, Mass.)

12B.Priscilla Margaret Pratt (March 6, 1926, Cambridge, Mass. - December 9, 1975, North Charleston, NC), married Paul Sewell Phillips (April 17, 1923 - November 19, 1996), parents of four sons

12C. Henry Pratt (March 16, 1927, Arlington, Mass. - April 14, 1927, Boston, Mass.)

11B.Florence Louise Pratt (April 23, 1889, Somerville, Mass. - Dec. 28, 1936, Lynn, Mass.), married on Sept. 11, 1911 Alden Chaplin Loring (Oct. 25, 1886, Palatka, Florida - June 7, 1953, Fall River, Mass.) parents of

12a.Alden Pratt Loring (Sept. 1, 1913, Concord, Mass. - December 1983, Kittery, Maine), married Cecelia Gallant (April 6, 1906, Lynn, Mass.- Dec. 11, 2000, Geneva, Florida), parents of

13A.Wayne Thomas Loring (Nov. 25, 1940, Lynn, Mass. - July 28, 1974, Kittery, Maine), married Carol Davis, parents of four children

12b.Barbara Emeline Loring (July 30, 1918, Cambridge, Mass. - Aug. 16, 2003, Newburyport, Mass.), married Stanley O. Robertson (June 8, 1915, Lynn, Mass. - June 23, 1993, Mass.), parents of two daughters

9C.John Bridge Pratt (June 16, 1833, Boston, Mass. - November 27, 1870, Malden, Mass.), married on May 23, 1860 Anna Bronson Alcott (March 16, 1831, Germantown, Penn. - July 17, 1893, Concord, Mass.), parents of

10a.Frederick Alcott Pratt (March 28, 1863, Chelsea, Mass. - March 11, 1910, Concord, Mass.), married Jessica Lillian Cate [sometimes called Jennie] (June 14, 1862, Union Village, NH - August 12, 1934, Concord, Mass.), parents of

11a.Bronson Alcott Pratt (Aug. 13, 1889, Melrose, Mass. - 1943), married Louise De Revere Grant (1892 - 1984), parents of

12(I).Ann Alcott Pratt (Feb. 9, 1924, Fitchburg, Mass. - June 11, 2002, Hyannis, Mass.), married John Wadsworth Lummus (1921 - ?), parents of four daughters

12(II).Louise Revere Pratt (1927 - 2010), married Cecil R. Nipps, later married Ronald Mills (1927 - ?), parents of four children (Mills)

11b.Elizabeth Sewall Pratt (Nov. 14, 1891, Boston, Mass. - Aug. 4, 1920, Concord, Mass.), married Alfred C. Redfield (1890 - 1983), who remarried after Elizabeth's death

11c.Frederick Alcott Pratt (June 7, 1895, Marblehead, Mass. - June 10, 1895, Marblehead, Mass.)

11d.Louisa Alcott Pratt (April 27, 1900, Concord, Mass. - Oct. 24, 1982), married William F. Kussin (1897 - 1970), parents of three children

11e.Frederick Wolsey Pratt (Feb. 17, 1902, Concord, Mass. - May 21, 1957, Concord, Mass.), married Theresa Winsor (1904 - 1984), parents of three sons

10b.John Sewall Pratt [adopted by Louisa May Alcott and name changed to John Sewall Pratt Alcott] (June 24, 1865, Roxbury, Mass. - June 20, 1923, Newton, Mass.), married Eunice May (Plummer) Hunting, parent of
Elverton Hunting (1897 - ?), adopted by John S. P. Alcott as Elverton Huntington Alcott

9D.Caroline Hayden Pratt (November 9, 1836, Boston, Mass. - July 10, 1866, Concord, Mass.)

9E.Theodore Parker Pratt (July 2, 1842, West Roxbury, Mass. - March 20, 1859, Concord, Mass.)

Appendix H

Photos from Minot Pratt family album

For information about this album see
Historic Photo Album of the Minot Pratt and Alvin Adams Families

Likely Minot & Maria Pratt ca. 1860

Likely Minot & Maria Pratt ca. 1875

Likely Frederick Gray Pratt ca. 1860

Likely Sarah Pratt ca. 1860, wife of Frederick

John Bridge Pratt ca. 1860

Anna Alcott Pratt ca. 1860, wife of John

Likely Caroline Hayden Pratt ca. 1860